

Russia

COUNTRY:
Russia

PROJECT:
Assistance to Russian Orphans (ARO)

IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION:
Holt International Children's Services and Mercy Corps
Collaborating organizations and project coverage: Holt International Children's Services, in a consortium with Charities Aid Foundation/Russia (CAF/Russia), implements ARO in Western Russia, with an emphasis on Novgorod and Tomsk oblasts. Mercy Corps implements ARO in

the Russian Far East, with a focus on Primorskii Krai and Magadan oblast. It partners with a leading child services organization, European Children's Trust (ECT) and the World Association of Children and Parents (WACAP), a children and family-centered organization that has been working in the Russian Far East since 1994.

USAID FUNDING PERIOD:
September 1999-September 2002

USAID AMOUNT:
\$6 million (a portion support activities related to HIV/AIDS)

PURPOSE

The Assistance to Russian Orphans (ARO) Program works with Russian nongovernmental organizations and their partners to address the escalating problem of children being abandoned in Russian institutions when parents could no longer provide proper care. The primary purpose of ARO activity is to promote community-based, family-centered services that will improve the current situation of Russian orphans. USAID awarded cooperative agreements to Holt International Children's Services and Mercy Corps International in 1999 to lead two consortia that could improve local capacity to deal with this problem and promote networking and information sharing among Russian nongovernmental organizations. ARO seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- Prevention of child abandonment and promotion of family-based care for orphans and abandoned children as an alternative to institutionalization;
- Development of community-based services to support special needs children;
- Community reintegration of older children leaving state institutions; and
- Development and strengthening of networks between organizations and community-based groups working in the area of child welfare.

The ARO program does not target "AIDS orphans," nor does it support international adoptions, donations of material or medical assistance, research or survey work. Instead, the activities target communities where HIV/AIDS makes children vulnerable. Grants direct services and community mobilization efforts within an environment where HIV/AIDS is significantly increasing the vulnerability of children and adolescents.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF ARO/WEST

ARO/West has successfully identified and engaged key government and nonprofit leaders in the child welfare field in the Novgorod and Tomsk regions. Six rounds of grant competition for technical assistance and direct services have resulted in the provision of financial assistance to 45 organizations. Direct beneficiaries to date include 2,363 abandoned children, 803 children with disabilities, and 1,743 families. Examples of accomplishments include:

- Development of innovative crisis services for children, teens, and adults as an active model for abandonment prevention among high-risk groups. Activities include: programs for children who have run away from home; a city-wide model of abandonment prevention based upon a partnership among a children's shelter, a private center offer-

ing social and psychological support, and relevant government bodies;

- Sharing of experiences among Russian nongovernmental organizations on reintroduction of orphans into society and identification and preparation of potential foster families;
- Disability awareness, education, and training programs for maternity hospitals;
- Establishment of a child care research and training center;
- Crisis interventions for families at risk of abandoning children; and
- Abandonment prevention of newly born high-risk babies.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF ARO/EAST:

ARO/East has funded 12 projects in Primorskii Krai and Magadan region since August 1999. Within five months of grantee operation, 156 children, 135 families, and eight foster families have been assisted. More than 200 child welfare practitioners received training and technical assistance on abandonment prevention and other critical child welfare issues.

Activities include:

- Establishment of two fostering programs, one in Vladivostok and the other in Magadan City, involving eight foster families and nine children;
- Support of three projects within Primorskii Krai working with children with disabilities. Due to the work of the center in Spassk city, no child between the age of three and seven has entered an institution during the proceeding three months of the life of the project.
- Support to three projects working within Primorskii Krai and Magadan focusing on prevention services to assist families with the care of their children and avoid their placement into institutions.
- Integration of young people leaving state institutions into society. The project provides assistance to 33 children aged between 14 and 18, conducting training on life and job skills

PRIORITY ACTIVITIES, 2001–2002

- Evaluate the effect of activities;
- Award grants to ensure that comprehensive services reach outlying communities and high-risk children and their families, and
- Develop innovative community and family-centered solutions to prevent abandonment.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The project can provide expertise for other orphans and vulnerable children projects in the following areas:

- Creation of guidelines for administration of small grants;
- Mid-project monitoring and evaluation;
- Training competent social work staff;
- Networking with local and governmental authorities; and
- Abandonment prevention and counseling within high-risk families.

CONTACT INFORMATION

ARO/West:

Holt International Children Services/ Moscow,
Nancy Luther, Acting Program Manager,
Tel/Fax: (095) 725-4443 (nluther@aro.ru)
(www.holtintl.org) and (www.aro.ru)

ARO/East:

Mercy Corps/Vladivostok,
James Donally, Program Manager,
Tel: (4232) 300-494 or 300-495,
Fax: (4232) 300-497,
(jdonally@mci.lanitdv.ru) (www.mercycorps.org) and
(www.aro.ru)

USAID/Russia:

Elena Gurvich, ARO Project Manager,
(egurvich@usaid.gov),
Kerry Pelzman, (kpelzman@usaid.gov),
Olga Kulikova, ARO Project Management Assistant,
okulikova@usaid.gov